

House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Community Affairs

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Secretary: .....

**Forbes, Bev (REPS)**

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 28 October 2003 1:13 PM  
**To:** Committee, FCA (REPS)  
**Subject:** Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry

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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

[REDACTED]

28th October, 2003

Committee Secretary  
 Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs  
 Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry  
 Department of the House of Representatives  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600  
 Australia

Dear Committee,

Yesterday I attended for 1 hour the meeting of the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs at Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour. I could not get adequate childcare for my 3 year old son otherwise I would have been present for the whole of the meeting and presented my opinion to you in person.

I speak from an individual point of view as a mother of four children. I have two past partners with whom I have successfully negotiated custody. In the first instance we began with 50:50 care of our two year old daughter. She loved her father but did not want to be with him so often. She experienced severe distress each time he collected her even if I were not present. After a number of months her father chose to see her less often as a consequences of his growing work commitments. He basically got too busy and prioritised promotion over parenting, contact changed from three nights a week to three nights a month. Our daughter is now 17 and still bears emotional scars from that time of forced 50:50 co-parenting.

My second partner and I did not ever live together, but nevertheless had a son. The father (whom I shall call X) was complacent about the baby before he was born but became openly hostile towards me as I approached full term claiming he had not wanted a child. We tried to resolve the issue and X was present at the birth of our son. For the next two years my relationship with X was difficult. He fluctuated in the attention he gave to our son, and became increasingly abusive towards me and my other children. The relationship ended in caos with me and my older children obtaining an AVO against X. After that X chose not to see our son for weeks at a time. 6 months after we ended the relationship we began (at my insistance) mediation about parenting obligations. At that point X decided he wanted 50% care because he did not want me to have his son, nor 'any money'. Under the proposed scheme would he have been awarded 50% care? X never hurt our son directly but would hold him in his arms as he screamed at me and tried to push me around. Under the current proposal would X receive 50% care?

X has accepted every second weekend and half school holidays as care time for our son. Nevertheless X has been late to pick up on many occasions, even forgetting completely to pick up our son for Easter holidays, and a birthday. Our son (now 7) has behavioural problems that have been noted by his teachers to be greatly exacerbated by visits with X. I truly believe

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that both parents need to have input and work co-operatively parenting the child. That is why I have persevered in this case when it would have been far easier to exclude X. The value of 50% care in this case would be only detrimental to the child. Under the current proposal the cost of negotiating through the legal system would have been huge.

50:50 custody will create difficult and damaging situations for children, particularly those of pre-school age. It is a situation to be worked towards, not a starting point.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms NOT to support this legislation.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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